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THE BEN BLEWETT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL OF ST. LOUIS—PART I

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The Ben Blewett Jun or High School of St. Louis is a school of 1,350 pupils and a teaching staff of 15 men and 41 women, situated in one of the residential districts of the city. The pupils come mainly from well-to-do families, only 15 per cent of them of foreign-born parents, and a large majority of them planning to enter the Senior High School situated in an adjoining block. This fact must be borne in mind in considering the organization, the curriculum, and the methods of instruction provided by Blewett. Obviously a junior high school in a residential district of such an order faces problems very different from those which will confront some of the other seven junior high schools now projected for St. Louis.

The school is housed in a three-story building, the basement of which is given over to manual-training shops, domestic-science workrooms, including a model middle-class city apartment, a girls' gymnasium, and a large lunchroom. The first floor has offices, classrooms, laboratories, study hall, dressmaking and art rooms; the second, classrooms, commercial rooms, laboratories, and library; the third, classrooms, laboratories, music rooms, boys' gymnasium, and an auditorium seating 800. A spacious playground, laid out with athletic fields of various sorts, covers a city block. The entire plant, modern throughout, provides ample accommodations for the varied activities of a school whose keynote is education for democracy through democratizing school life. And even the excellent Blewett plant is inferior in many respects to the general average of St. Louis school plants; the city boasts of having one of the best-housed school systems in the country.

ARTICULATION WITH GRADE AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

Blewett is an intermediate link between five elementary schools and Soldan Senior High School, all the schools drawing their pupils from the same general district. From any of the schools come children to the seventh grade of Blewett who have finished the first six grades, and any others who the elementary-school principals think will be benefited by the change. Flexible promotion, each child advancing at his optimum rate, progress according to maturing age and interests rather than exact academic attainment, the advantage of experience in a new grade rather than repetition of an old grade, appears to be the principle employed. This educational practice, stated by Mr. P. W. L. Cox, principal of Blewett, in conference with his elementary-school colleagues, is as follows:

The junior high school purposes to take the pupils where the elementary school leaves off; the junior high school's point of view is that *all children* are entitled to the fullest and richest educational opportunities possible. Therefore, the junior high school believes that there is an inverse relation between high average scholarship and school efficiency and that high average scholarship means the undemocratic selection of the fit judged according to an artificial standard. Finally, the junior high school accepts, welcomes gladly, not only nice, bright children who have had high marks in the sixth grade, but just as willingly, any children over twelve years, good or bad, dull or bright. It intends to be an educational institution, not a selective instrument.

The same spirit shows also in the transfer of pupils from Blewett to Soldan Senior High. All pupils are promoted who are over sixteen years of age and who the teachers believe will be benefited by the transfer. In all subjects the Junior High sets up certain standards of achievement or definite statements of work completed by pupils who are to go forward to the tenth grade at Soldan. This is a three-year senior high school requiring for graduation twelve units of work within the prescription of definite curricula.

All pupils promoted to Soldan from Blewett are accepted as tenth-grade pupils, except certain groups who have entered Junior High in November (second quarter) or in April (fourth quarter). They are conditioned in a half-course in vocations; they have 12½ units of work to complete for graduation. In short, Blewett does not present a record of a number of hours spent by pupils in given subjects; instead, she assures the Senior High School that the pupils have had certain educational experiences, and through these experiences have attained a given standard of skill.

GROUPINGS FOR VARYING ABILITIES AND INTERESTS

An essential feature in the organization of the student body attempts to meet one of the primary purposes for which a junior

high school exists, namely, the grouping of pupils according to their varying capacities and interests.¹ Differing intellectual abilities are cared for by what is known as the "A B C grouping;" varying educational preferences and vocational aptitudes by the "x, y, z grouping," and varying social interests by the "m, n, o grouping." Of these, the intellectual classification is tentatively determined in the early part of the seventh grade by means of the opinions of the elementary-school principals checked up by intelligence tests.² The tentative classification is modified later by the judgment of pupils advisers as the work of the first quarter advances. x, y, z grouping for vocational aptitudes or, as Blewett prefers to designate it, for educational guidance, is determined at the beginning of the eighth grade, after one year of educational experimentation and prevocational investigation, in accord with vocational choices. These eighth- and ninth-grade choices are made by the pupils with the advice of teachers and the consent of parents by methods to be detailed later. The m, n, o groupings, intended primarily to bring about, in social activities, cross sections of the other two types of groupings, in actual practice have been found to be somewhat superfluous. Spontaneous and natural associations of playground and extra-curriculum activities apparently break indiscriminately across intellectual and vocational groupings. Children of like size, age, and play instincts find their way into recreational groups quite irrespective of mere formal school classifications. In Blewett, at least, the fear of certain opponents of the Junior High, to the effect that harmful social distinctions may be emphasized, seems not to be realized.

PUPIL ADVISERS

Another administrative feature provides that each group of pupils retain throughout their stay in the school the same class-room teacher who is also their class adviser. Moreover, within any one grade each group comes under the instruction of a limited number of teachers, and an effort is made to keep a group under the instruction of the same small circle of teachers through all the grades. This arrangement accomplishes two purposes: first, a

¹ Philip W. L. Cox, "The Ben Blewett Junior High School: An Experiment in Democracy," School Review, XXVII (May, 1919), 345-59.

² Tests used in 1919-20 are Thorndike, scale Alpha, sets IV to VII and Kelly-Trabue, scale C.

classroom teacher becomes intimately acquainted with the group of thirty-five children whom she accompanies; secondly, the judgment of four or five teachers all continuously working with the same group of 140 pupils may at any time be called upon concerning a troublesome case. To be noted here, also, is the fact that progress with her group means that no teacher has a fixed room. She changes from quarter to quarter as her special group advances in the curriculum. In general, ninth-grade classes occupy the first-floor classrooms, the eighth the second, and the seventh the third-floor rooms. Therefore when a classroom teacher has taken one group through the ninth grade, she begins the cycle again with a seventh-grade class. As the scheme of accelerated promotion carries A groups through three grades in two years, the B groups in two and one-half years, and the C groups in three years, some teachers accomplish their cycles in shorter time than others.

PROVISIONS FOR ACCELERATING PROGRESS

In accord with a principle named above, the school is carefully organized to provide for the saving of time on the part of pupils of marked ability. The A groups accomplish in two years as much as, or more than, the C groups in three. In every subject there is a certain minimum which all must cover; an A class or an AB class not only covers that minimum more rapidly, but it also extends the work widely into supplementary projects. For example, all eighth-year classes in general science are expected to accomplish as a minimum all of the projects set forth in the class textbook. In addition the A groups find much time to spend in the supplementary projects at the end of each chapter. Occasionally rapid promotion is secured by the transfer of a pupil who has shown marked improvement to a more accelerated group in the same subject. Pupils are always transferred upward, never downward.

The table on the next page roughly indicates the relative advancement of three sections of A, B, and C levels of ability. The C sections advance four quarters per year, B sections five quarters, and A sections six quarters.

A second device for acceleration is found in a careful study of overage pupils in every group. After consultation with other instructors concerned, a class adviser makes periodically for the principal a careful report of each individual who is overage, together with a recommendation concerning his transfer or promotion. Naturally very few overage children are found in A groups, while the C groups may sometimes include half of their number as overage pupils. In general, the policy is to push all retarded children forward as rapidly as possible and it is not infrequently found that one so promoted shows an increased zest and a marked improvement in his work. When they are 16 years old, all children are promoted into the tenth grade in the Senior High. Frequently they fail, but their promotion avoids the waste of their own time in lower grades, and the more than waste of time of the other children whom their presence would hamper.

Groups	First Year	Second Year	Third Year
A	7-1; 7-2; 7-3; 7-4; 8-1; 8-2.	8-3; 8-4; 9-1; 9-2; 9-3; 9-4. 8-2; 8-3; 8-4; 9-1; 9-2	Enter Senior High at end of two years.
В	7-1; 7-2; 7-3; 7-4; 8-1	8-2; 8-3; 8-4; 9-1; 9-2	9-3; 9-4. Enter Senior High at end of two and one-half
C	7-1; 7-2; 7-3; 7-4	8-1; 8-2; 8-3; 8-4	years. 9-1;9-2;9-3;9-4. Enter Senior High at end of three years.

A third device, intended to care for extreme cases of retardation, is euphemistically called The Rapid Advancement Class. These are pupils two and often three years overage who for various reasons have lagged far behind their comrades of like age. In charge of this group is one of the best teachers in the school. She uses a multitude of devices to stimulate earnest effort on the part of her charges, encouraging them, helping them in supervised study periods to overcome their special limitations. The goal constantly before them is early entrance into the Senior High School.

FACULTY ORGANIZATION

Blewett exemplifies a very decentralized plan of faculty organization and plan of administration. Each classroom teacher is responsible for the mechanical administration of his group; matters of attendance, tardiness, and discipline, are referred to the office only when an adviser believes that he himself is unable adequately to deal with them. Standing next in authority above the classroom teachers there is, for each grade, a grade administrator, whose

duties are to supervise the advisory period programs, to oversee social work, advisory periods, and auditorium sessions, and to authorize transfers and promotions within his grade. The school as a mechanical organization is in charge of the assistant principal who supervises records and reports, communication with other schools, requisition of supplies, and the like. The principal's chief function is that of an educational expert and leader encouraging, criticizing, directing both teachers and pupils.

General teachers' meetings are held on alternate Mondays for the discussion of reports made by various members of the faculty, subjects and leaders for their program being in charge of a faculty committee.

On alternate weeks the teachers meet by subject groups, under the leadership of department chairmen, with definite programs. In addition, many faculty committees meet frequently for specific purposes. The principal is ex-officio member of every committee, and takes his place in the ranks. Every teacher of every department is a free agent to make his best contribution toward developing efficient members of a democratic community. The ideal is that no teacher shall feel hampered by supervision and that every teacher shall feel that help is available for the improvement of the service he renders. This feature of academic freedom and initiative of the teaching force is set forth at length, because a faculty whose primary task is to inculcate democratic initiative and responsibility in 1,350 children must itself objectify that spirit.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT

By means of a school constitution provision is made for an elaborate organization of self-government on the part of the pupils. Beginning with room groups, or "advisory" groups as they are called, each chooses its own name and motto, such as Loyalty Hall.

"Loyal all to Junior High

And our motto is, 'We'll try.'"

Each elects a varying number of officers, a president, secretary, treasurer, thrift-stamp treasurer, reporter to *Junior Life*, the school paper, and sergeant-at-arms. These officials are charged with the general business and discipline of their room. Administrations, usually permanent for a year, may change at irregular intervals as occasion requires. The room organization is thus the democratic

unit upon which the government of the school rests. It is a town meeting form of control.

A school constitution prescribes the higher orders of government, each room electing two congressmen, a boy and girl, to the student congress, there being one congress for each grade under the supervision of the faculty grade administrator. Congresses meet at the call of the administrator and consider matters pertaining to student government, student interest, or other needs of the school. Congressmen report to their advisory groups such actions as may be taken.

The School Cabinet is a smaller body made up of the principal, assistant principal, the three grade administrators, one teacher from each grade chosen by the principal, one boy and one girl elected by each grade congress, and student delegates from the school paper, *Junior Life*, from the corridor officers, from the Blewett "B" Council, and from certain athletic, civic, and music clubs.

The passing of classes is supervised by corridor officers, selected from the boys of the school, who are given military rank from captain down, and who constantly wear large buttons indicating their rank and office. Such officers are in the charge of a teacher who is relieved of teaching one class. They direct all traffic in the building, assist in discipline at auditorium session, taking their position in conspicuous places, and maintain order at athletic contests on the playground. A few girls are on duty at the girls' locker-rooms.

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE CURRICULUM SEVENTH GRADE—UNIFORM FOR ALL PUPILS

(A, B, C sections developed as work progresses)

Courses	Periods
Social Study	5
English	5
General Mathematics	5
General Science	$2\frac{1}{2}$
Music	$1\frac{1}{2}$
Art	1
Advisers' Periods	
Practical Arts	
Physical Training	$2\frac{1}{2}$

EIGHTH GRADE Periods Commercial (v) Periods Technical (z) Academic (x)1. Social Study..... 5 1. Same..... 5 1. Same..... 5 (A, B, C pupils.) 8-1 Pupils grouped with and 2, American academic and techhistory to 1876. 8nical pupils. 3 and 4, modern social problems. 2. English 5 2. Same..... 5 2. Same..... 5 (A, B, C pupils.) 3. Bookkeeping.... 5 3. Shop Experiences 5 3. Language..... 5 Latin, Spanish, Penmanship and Woodworking. French, or (A pupils spelling. (A and B auto mechanics, electricity, printonly may elect) pupils only.) Literature. ing, metal work. (A, B, C pupils). Office practice and commercial paper, penmanship, spelling, typewriting, filing, (A, B, C pupils). 4. Mathematics..... 5 4. Mathematics 5 4. Mathematics.... 5 Applied General m a t h e -Arithmetic, e q u a mathematics: algebra, tions, graphs, commatics. geometry, trigomercial organinometry, graphs, zation. arithmetic. rithms, slide rule. 5. General Science... 5 5. Same..... 5 Applied Science. 5 6. Same..... 5 6. Allotments..... 5 6. Same..... 5 Practical arts, appreciation of art, music, physical training. 30 30 30

The technical curriculum above is in practical arts for boys. Practical arts for girls substitutes as different items:

3.	Practical Home and Store Experiences5
	Dressmaking and millinery
	Cooking
	Sewing
	Homekeeping
4.	Applied Arithmetic5
	Budgets and accounts
	Commercial forms

In this grade, also, there are three other variations of the technical curriculum emphasizing mechanical drawing for boys, art for girls and boys, music for girls and boys. In each case the chief modifications are in items 3, 4, and 5, the changes calling for projects in which drawing, art, and music, respectively, are applied. In reality this elaborate classification of curricula of the technical order is not rigidly maintained. Boys in the manual-training group and girls in the domestic science group have in the eighth year differentiated courses in general science, while all others of the technical (z) and commercial (y) classifications are placed in the general science work as prescribed for the academic (x) groups.

The curriculum of the ninth grade is generally similar to that of the ninth grade of the four-year high schools of St. Louis. Content and method of industrial courses are less systematic and more practical. Modification and differentiation of courses in mathematics and science have been made, and the foreign languages, especially Latin, have been deformalized.

NINTH GRADE

Courses Required	Periods	Courses Elective	Periods
Community civics ½ year Vocations ½ year English Chorus music Physical training	5 5	24-29 periods per week. subject may be taken in three curricula by special sion if a pupil makes 80 or higher in every su	the first l permis- per cent
		preceding quarter.	•
General Curriculum		Two Electives	
As above.		Science	
		Latin	
		French	
		Spanish	
		Mathematics	5
Classical Curriculum		One Elective	
Latin	5	Science	5
		Mathematics	5
Scientific Curriculum			
Botany ½ year	5		
Physiology ½ year	5		
Algebra	5		
Fine Arts Curriculum		One Elective	
Art	10	Science	5
		Mathematics	5
		Latin	5

	French
Manual-Training Curriculum	-
Manual training5	
Mechanical drawing5	
Mathematics5	
Home Economics Curriculum	
Household arts10	
Science5	
Commercial Curriculum	One Elective
Bookkeeping5	Science5
Arithmetic3	Mathematics5
Penmanship2	Latin5
-	French5
	Spanish5

SOCIAL STUDIES

There can be no question but that Blewett is moving in the direction of exalting social studies to become the core of the Junior-High program. Social study is the primary subject required continuously throughout the entire course for five periods a week. Moreover, art, music, and certain other allotment subjects, even English itself, the only other continuous five-hour subject, are in Blewett considered as directly contributing to the social training which is thus prominent in the curriculum and is in marked evidence in all of the social activities of the school. A visitor is struck by the frequency with which there appear in many classrooms discussions of group obligations, democratic duties, and social responsibilities of the school life itself.

Social studies in the seventh grade correlate history and geography and consist of four series of ten projects each, one project weekly per quarter, under four major problems. (1) First quarter: the origin of American history as found in the civilization around the Mediterranean before 1500 A.D. Beginning with Egypt, the story emphasizes the contribution made by each country to the knowledge and experience that was necessary before an enterprise like a new route by sea to India could be undertaken. Typical questions are, what gave rise to early sea trade, what was the connection between commerce and colonization, what germ of independence existed in the city-state governments of Greece? All point to the leadership of Europe in the fifteenth century as a period of discovery and exploration. (2) Second quarter: struggle

for freedom and empire from 1492 to 1620. Here the endeavor is to stress the relative importance and inter-relationships of the struggles for political and religious freedom on the one hand and those for commercial and political empire on the other. (3) Third quarter: world affairs between 1620 and 1763 as influenced by the desires for political and economic freedom, for wealth and economic independence, and for commercial and political empire. quarter: the war of American independence, its causes and beginnings, its relation to the sea power of England, and its importance as one of the great events in history. Grafted on to the chronological sequence just cited there appears in the second quarter a side topic—"A Study of the War for World-Democracy, 1914–18." To the outsider this seems to be in mild sense apologetic for the predominating ancient and mediaeval history still appearing in the seventh grade of a progressive school. It is only fair to say that apparently every effort is made to select only those historical topics which form a background for the dominating ideas in American life today.

Social science in the eighth grade proceeds purely upon the topical basis in American history as a story and interpretation of our democracy, quite openly discarding chronological sequence. The first quarter begins by comparing the war powers of the United States Government of 1918 with those of The Continental Congress, and ends by considering progress made so far by the 1919 Peace Conference dealing with the freedom of the seas. Second quarter contrasts industrial conditions of today with those of 1819. traces the development of domestic and foreign trade, and treats of the westward expansion of the United States as affecting democ-Third quarter discusses the geographic, industrial, and social differences which led to the Civil War, the problems involved in preserving the Union, and the problems of reconstruction. Comparison is made with world reconstruction in 1919. Fourth quarter presents these topics: territorial expansion; transportation and communication; taxation, including tariff and internal revenue; the Monroe Doctrine and its present application; trade relations with Latin America; labor questions; League of Nations; prohibition: growth of cities: and the like.

The ninth grade organizes its community civics in the first half-year on the basis of Dunn's Community Life, and its second

half-year course in the vocations on the background of Gowan and Wheatly's Occupations. Neither of these texts is considered by consecutive chapters; various chapters are taken at the most opportune seasons. They are supplemented by fairly wide independent reading and investigations, especially in the consideration of vocations for girls in which the primary text is deficient. Effort is made to keep classes acquainted with new books, with trade papers and magazines, and government bulletins dealing with vocations. All materials thus accumulated make their way by individual reports into the socialized recitations. Last year the classes supplemented their reading with group visits to the following establishments: Rice-Stix Dry Goods Company, Hamilton Brown Shoe Company, National Candy Company, National Biscuit Company, Loose-Wiles Biscuit Company, Busy Bee Confectionery Company, and Funsten Fur Company. Parents and friends, and sometimes business men from St. Louis, supplement the work with letters and talks. One outgrowth in 1919 was the formation of the Young Men's Business Club of Blewett Junior High.

EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

Primary, then, in the Junior High field of educational guidance for citizenship and vocational life are the unbroken series of subject-matter studies in social science content and a continuous effort to direct wise choice on the basis of sound information. Direct educational guidance is in the nature of pre-educational try-outs in the seventh and eighth grades, and prevocational education for non-academic, (y) and (z), pupils in the ninth grades.

GENERAL SCHEDULE OF ADVISORY WORK¹

Seventh grade:

- 1. Advisory work—5 times a week.
 - a) Reports of occupation of parent or guardian and of preparation necessary to follow that occupation.
 - b) Reports of curriculum elected by brother or sister in Senior High School giving reason for this selection, previous preparation, etc.
 - c) A study of courses and electives open to pupils at Blewett High School.
 - d) Visits to try-out rooms to familiarize pupils with work in order to enable them to elect wisely.
 - Educational enthusiasm aroused to fire pupils with ambition to continue their education.

¹ Cox, op. cit., pp. 350-51.

Eighth grade:

- 1. Advisory work.
 - a) Five-minute period morning and evening devoted to routine matters, announcements, etc.
 - b) For C groups one period per week set aside to be used in teaching pupils how to study, giving special help to the weak and toward preventing failures.
 - c) One period in three weeks given for advisory work to study problems in citizenship.
- 2. Electives—daily period for try-out work.
 - a) Pupils are advised to elect what interests them.
 - b) Pupils may change elective after a try-out.
 - c) Pupils may change elective when entering ninth year.

Ninth grade:

- 1. Advisory work—1 period in 2 weeks.
- 2. Electives-vocational try-outs.
 - a) Non-academic pupils electing practical arts take course in auto mechanics, printing, or cabinet-making.
 - b) Non-academic pupils electing household arts take course in dressmaking or cooking, including in this the actual purchasing of materials, dishwashing, serving, etc.
 - c) Non-academic pupils electing commerce (z) are trained to become expert copyists. [These are pupils of the C type who spend the full three years at Blewett and the A's and B's who elect the technical courses.]
- 3. Course in vocations.
 - a) To give vocational information.
 - b) To study occupations followed in St. Louis.

PART OF A CHART SHOWING STUDY OF C GROUP BY CLASS ADVISER

Name	Age	Health	General Characteristics
Girl A	11½	Nervous; lacks muscular control.	Average mental ability; lacking in self-control; no leadership; timid; sensitive; imaginative.
Boy B	12	Very healthy.	Much change of schools, public to private and vice versa. Forward; domineering; works irregularly be- cause of lack of concentration.
Boy C	131⁄2	Teeth loosened by blow in mouth; not attended to for several years. Still trouble him.	Came from—, Illinois; frequent change of schools; tells of frequent
Girl D	111/4	Had serious case of ty- phoid two years ago. Se- vere illness two months ago. Unable to retain even water. Fairly wearied. Needs varied work.	From good home; naturally a slow thinker; parents do most of thinking for her; quite babyish; little self-control.

When the pupils enter the school in the seventh grade, first quarter, the most deficient C group is placed in the hands of one of the strong teachers who immediately begins to make a detailed personal analysis of each pupil. She tabulates for record as exampled on page 38. After a few weeks of this investigation the pupils are distributed among the other C groups, placed in the charge of teachers best fitted to deal with their needs, and in groups best suited for their association.

NINTH-GRADE ADVISORY SCHEDULE

Advisory periods in the ninth grade are held on the odd weeks on Wednesday. Citizenship:

- I. Good leadership
 - 1-2 Class
 - 2-2 School
 - 3-2 Community (outside of school)
- II. Obligations of citizenship
 - 1-2 Maintenance of good character
 - 1-3 Personal character—habits formation of good habits 2-3 School character
 - 2-3 School character
 - 2-2 Efforts to maintain health
 - 1-3 Personal health
 - 2-3 Community health
 - 1-4 Under ordinary conditions
 - 2-4 In time of plagues
 - 1-5 Inspection of ponds and sewers
 - 2-5 Care of foods in home and shops
 - 3-5 Destruction of insect pests
 - 3-2 Proper spirit toward school authorities
 - 4-2 Proper spirit toward school organizations
 - 1-3 Membership
 - 2-3 Leadership
 - 5-2 Respect for school property
 - 1-3 House
 - 2-3 Furniture
 - 3-3 Decorative features
 - 6-2 Interest in school neighborhood
 - 1-3 Care of school grounds
 - 2-3 Shade trees
 - 3-3 Hedges
 - 7-2 Attitude toward neighborhood tradesmen
 - 8-2 Attitude toward policemen stationed for school duty
 - 9-2 Neighborliness

III. Helpful human service

- 1-2 Reverence for home
 - 1-3 Respect for parents
 - 2-3 Attitude toward other members of family
 - 3-3 Understanding of family budget
 - 1-4 Rent or taxes
 - 2-4 Food
 - 3-4 Clothes
 - 4-4 Personal earnings
 - 5-4 Amusements
 - 6-4 Personal savings
 - 7-4 Thrift
- 2-2 Service to school
 - 1-3 Team work
 - 2-3 In corridors
 - 3-3 In auditorium
 - 4-3 In lunchroom
 - 5-3 On school grounds—flag raising; outdoor games
- 3–2 Service to community
 - 1-3 Red Cross work
 - 2-3 Thrift Stamp campaigns
 - 3-3 Liberty Loan campaigns
 - 4-3 Non-partisan movement—raising taxes for school purposes.
- 4-2 Neighborhood interests
 - 1-3 Shade trees
 - 2-3 Beautiful grounds
 - 3-3 Care of vacant lots

The way in which other studies are made to fit in with social science as the core of the curriculum will appear in the second part of this article.

[To be concluded]